

The Star Game And The Hebdomad



Image 1: The Original Star Game

Preface

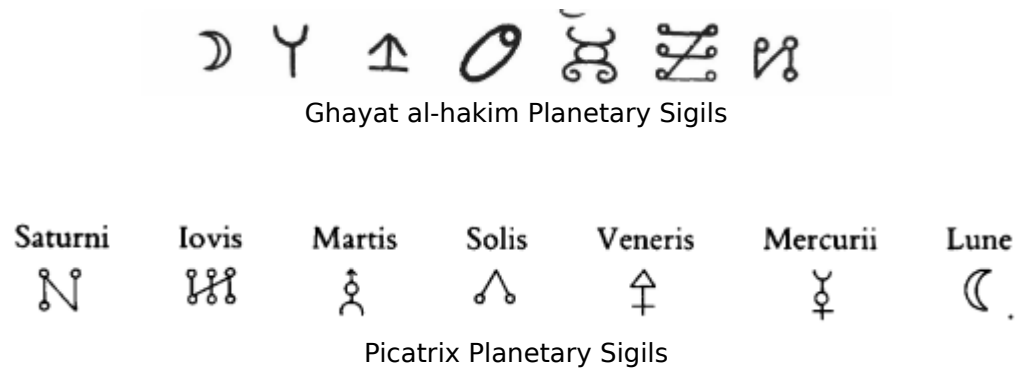
This essay will concentrate on the original 1975 Star Game, its hermetic origins and its significance as a challenging and alchemical game, and not on the later embellished so-called "advanced" version as used by the Order of Nine Angles (O9A) where the nine permutations of the three fundamental alchemical substances are regarded as the "Nine Angles" of O9A esotericism and where The Star Game with its multiple additional boards and pieces is used as a form of sorcery. {1}

In our view that embellished version detracts from the metaphysical beauty of the original.

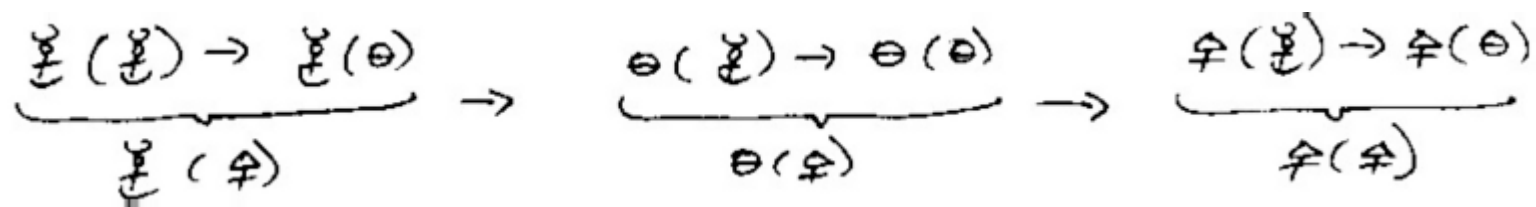
Introduction

The Star Game (TSG) is a three-dimensional seven-board game developed by David Myatt in 1975 and inspired by his reading of such works as Carl Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. {2} The seven boards represent the ancient hermetic septenary system, the hebdomad, as described in the Pymander tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum (c.200 ev) and also described in the later Arabic manuscript titled Ghayat al-hakim (c.1050 ev) where the hebdomad is associated

with the seven classical planets - Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn - each of which is represented by a sigil as in the later Latin translations of Ghayat al-hakim circulated under the title Picatrix between c.1300 and c.1459 ev:



The pieces of the Star Game are represented by the nine combinations of the three fundamental alchemical substances or elements - alchemical mercury, alchemical salt, alchemical sulphur - in the form of their sigils:



where ☿ is alchemical mercury, ⊖ is alchemical salt, and ♁ is alchemical sulphur. These three fundamental alchemical substances and the hebdomad were illustrated in the alchemical text *Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum*, published in 1613:



In other alchemical texts the combination of alchemical mercury, alchemical salt, and alchemical sulphur were said to produce Azoth, "the living water" also known as "the liquid of life", as illustrated in colour in the manuscript *Rosarium Philosophorum* (c. 1700s) where they represent spiritus, anima, and corpus:



Boards, Pieces, and Gameplay

There are two forms of The Star Game: the original one and the 'advanced' one. The original one, developed in the 1970s, has - as in Illustration 1 - seven boards each of which has nine black and nine white squares, and 27 pieces per side or player, one set black with the other white.

The boards themselves are set in a spiral one above the other and are named after the stars Naos, Deneb, Rigel, Mira, Antares, Arcturus, and Sirius, with Naos being the first board and Sirius the seventh.

In the original version each player has three sets of nine consisting of the following pieces:

$\Theta(\Theta)$	$\Theta(\Psi)$	$\Theta(\Phi)$	$\Psi(\Theta)$	$\Psi(\Psi)$	$\Psi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Theta)$	$\Phi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Psi)$
$\Theta(\Theta)$	$\Theta(\Psi)$	$\Theta(\Phi)$	$\Psi(\Theta)$	$\Psi(\Psi)$	$\Psi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Theta)$	$\Phi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Psi)$
$\Theta(\Theta)$	$\Theta(\Psi)$	$\Theta(\Phi)$	$\Psi(\Theta)$	$\Psi(\Psi)$	$\Psi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Theta)$	$\Phi(\Phi)$	$\Phi(\Psi)$

Image 2

The pieces are usually small cubes with each side marked with one of nine alchemical combinations. The movement rules of the game are that:

Each piece, when it is moved, is transformed into the next piece in the sequence, according to the following pattern:
 $\Theta(\Theta) \rightarrow \Theta(\Psi) \rightarrow \Theta(\Phi) \rightarrow \Psi(\Theta) \rightarrow \Psi(\Psi) \rightarrow \Psi(\Phi) \rightarrow \Phi(\Theta) \rightarrow \Phi(\Psi) \rightarrow \Phi(\Phi)$

Thus, a $\Theta(\Theta)$ when it is moved, becomes a $\Theta(\Psi)$ piece; a $\Psi(\Phi)$ piece becomes a $\Phi(\Theta)$ piece, and so on. When a $\Phi(\Phi)$ piece is moved, it becomes a $\Theta(\Theta)$ piece, and the sequence begins again.

The Φ pieces (that is, $\Phi(\Theta)$ $\Phi(\Psi)$ $\Phi(\Phi)$) can move from any board to any other board, to any vacant square, as well as to any vacant square on the board they are already on.

The Ψ pieces ($\Psi(\Theta)$ $\Psi(\Psi)$ $\Psi(\Phi)$) can move across the board they are on to any vacant square, or up or down two boards. For example, a Ψ piece on Sirius can move to either Arcturus or Antares; while a Ψ piece on, say, Rigel could move to Deneb, or Naos, or Mira or Antares, to any vacant square on these boards.

The Θ pieces (that is, $\Theta(\Theta)$ $\Theta(\Psi)$ $\Theta(\Phi)$) can move only across a board one square at a time to a square of the same colour, or up or down one board to a square of the same colour. Thus, for example, a Θ piece on a black square on Arcturus could move to a vacant black square on either Sirius or Antares - or move across the Arcturus board to a square of the same colour.

After any piece has been moved according to the rules above and placed on a new square, it is changed for the piece next in the sequence above, and when next moves, moves according to the rules for the new piece.

A $\Phi(\Phi)$ piece on any square on Naos may capture any piece of the opposite colour on any square or any board, except Naos. The piece so captured is removed from the board and plays no further part. After such a capture, the $\Phi(\Phi)$ piece becomes a $\Theta(\Theta)$ piece.

Image 3

Thus, when a piece is moved and transformed the cube is turned so that the active symbol is at the top.

In terms of placement of the pieces at the start of the game, six pieces for each player are placed on Sirius in the same pattern as shown in Image 1 above for Deneb. Arcturus has three pieces for each player, placed as on Image 1. Antares has six pieces per player as in Image 1, with the first three pieces being as the first three on Deneb. Mira has no pieces.

Rigel has the remaining three pieces of the Ψ set placed as the Θ set on Sirius. Naos has three pieces per player arranged as in Image 1.

In addition, each piece has a certain 'degree of freedom' according to its type:

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Image 4

The pieces are usually small cubes with each side marked with one of nine alchemical combinations so that when the

piece is moved and transformed the cube is turned so that the active symbol is at the top.

The original objective of the game was for a player to place three of their pieces on certain squares on Mira, with the type of these pieces and their placing on that board decided by both players beforehand. The first player to do this wins the game.

However, in actual use the players can decide to change the initial, starting, placement of the pieces on the boards as well as the objective.

Alchemical, Archetypal, And Personal Symbolism

While The Star Game (TSG) in its original form can be and has for decades been played by the cognoscenti as a strategic and tactical game akin to conventional chess, it can also be played by two persons as both an alchemical and a personal, psychological, game with the pieces for instance representing (i) the individual psyche, or archetypes (and their associated mythos/mythoi) or (ii) an individual or a partnership alchemical quest, an anados (ἀνοδος) for Lapis Philosophicus. {3}

Thus in the psychological sense the pieces were related by Myatt to Jungian personality types:

and the emergence of new elements. The three basic symbols of the Star Game - , and  and  - represent the basic elements from which the psychic energies are formed, when manifest on the individual level. Thus, the nine combinations of these three elements, as the pieces of the Star Game, represent the combination of the energies possible.

However, for a complete description of the individual psyche, these nine combinations are extended over the seven boards on a three-fold basis because the seven boards (re-presenting the seven spheres of the septenary) symbolize the possible orientations of consciousness: in simple terms, the seven spheres and the correspondences associated with them (particularly the god-forms or archetypes) are present, either latently or expressed, within each individual.

To make this clear, Jung's terminology will be used, although it should be remembered that even this is only one expression of many: the most representative expression being the abstract symbols themselves since these are devoid of the conflict of 'opposites' and the dogmatic/religious undertones that underlie many of the traditional expressions.

In this terminology, the seven spheres represent the seven fundamental archetypes within our psyche, according to the table given below where the archetypes are expressed in terms of both Greek and Norse mythology: for example, Mercury is the 'trickster' - Loki in Norse, Hermes in Greek. As with all such representations, these are only a guide, an outward expression of inner essence.

	Extravert Feeling type
	" Intuitive
	" Thinking
	Intravert Feeling ;
	" Intuitive;
	" Thinking;

Thus () may be said to represent 'Feeling'; () 'Intuition' and () 'Thinking' as these terms are defined by Jung.

Further,  () describes 'ego' consciousness;  () 'self' consciousness, and  () the consciousness beyond the 'self' -

Image 5

Which Myattian interpretation, in terms of personality, is only one of many possible interpretations as he himself acknowledged.

In historical alchemical and hermetic terms, the nine combinations are the possible permutations and interactions of the elemental forces designated spiritus, anima, and corpus, both in the individual, in their partner (if they have one) and in 'society' past and present. Hence the movement of pieces would represent not only the quest for Jungian 'individuation' and the wisdom - Azoth, the liquid of life - that lies beyond such individuation but also the difficulties and obstacles, the opposition, as manifest by the opposing player, that may be encountered.

In terms of the quest for Lapis Philosophicus, the seven boards (the seven stages of the quest) are referenced to the personal traits described in the Pymander tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum:

καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικὴν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.

"Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait."
{4}

That is:

- ° that vigour - enthusiasm - which grows and which fades
- ° those dishonourable machinations
- ° that eagerness which deceives
- ° the arrogance of authority over others
- ° profane insolence and reckless haste
- ° the bad inclinations occasioned by a comfortable life-style

and thence to what we have termed The Hebdomian Way with its seven practical stages {5} by means of which Lapis Philosophicus may be attained, with the opponent again representing the known, the posited, and the unexpected difficulties and obstacles that may be encountered both internally, within one's self, and externally.

In addition, the player or players of The Star Game can develop their own interpretation of its 'meaning and purpose' be such archetypal, mythological, personal, or otherwise. Which makes The Star Game intriguing, versatile, challenging, and enigmatic.

Conclusion

Shorn of its subsequent and in our view unnecessary association with twentieth century sorcery, the original septenary Star Game has much to commend it both in hermetic terms - as a new symbolic and cerebral exposition of hermetic philosophy - and in terms of a practical and interesting board game suitable for the twenty-first century.

Seven Oxonians
January 2022 ev

{1} Details of both versions of The Star Game - the original and the 'advanced' - were first published in 1989 in the typewritten 125 page text *Naos - A Practical Guide to Modern Magick* of which 63 facsimile spiral-bound copies were originally distributed. Prior to this, the manuscripts describing The Star Game had been in private circulation for many years.

Further copies of the facsimile of *Naos*, with the addition of new card covers, were distributed from the 1990s onwards, one of which was the source of the digital (pdf) version which was widely circulated and is currently available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210515224216/https://omega9alpha.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/naos-practical-guide-to-modern-magick.pdf>

In 1990 a limited printed now rare edition in a ring binder was published by Coxland Press, a copy of which is in the British Library at General Reference Collection YK.1993.a.13307

The development of the 'advanced' form of The Star Game and the association of TSG with twentieth century sorcery/magick occurred in the mid-1980s, with the term magick, as employed in the subtitle of the *Naos* text, as a synonym for sorcery dating from the European Renaissance and used in books such as the collection of alchemical texts edited by Elias Ashmole published under the title *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* in 1652 ev.

{2} David Myatt, *The Star Game: History and Theory*, e-text, 2008, <https://lapisphilosophicus.wordpress.com/star-game-history-and-theory/>

{3} Finding Lapis Philosophicus is the aim of hermetic, alchemical, and several other esoteric traditions ancient and modern, with the term used to describe Wisdom understood as: (i) "a balanced personal judgement; having discernment" and (ii) having certain knowledge of a pagan, esoteric, kind to do with living beings, human nature, and (iii) having an understanding of ourselves, of our relation to the world, to Nature, and to the Cosmos beyond.

The term Lapis Philosophicus - post-classical Latin, c. 13th century; qv. Byzantine Greek: λίθος τῶν σοφῶν - pre-dates the term lapis philosophorum and was used by early writers on alchemy such as Raymund Lully, and by the Elizabethan Oxford classical scholar John Case in a book entitled *Lapis Philosophicus, Sive Commentarius In Octo Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, published in 1600 CE. The term was also used by Isaac Newton in a handwritten manuscript

entitled *Lapis Philosophicus cum suis rotis elementaribus* [MS 416, in Babson College's Grace K. Babson Collection of the Works of Sir Isaac Newton, currently housed in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California].

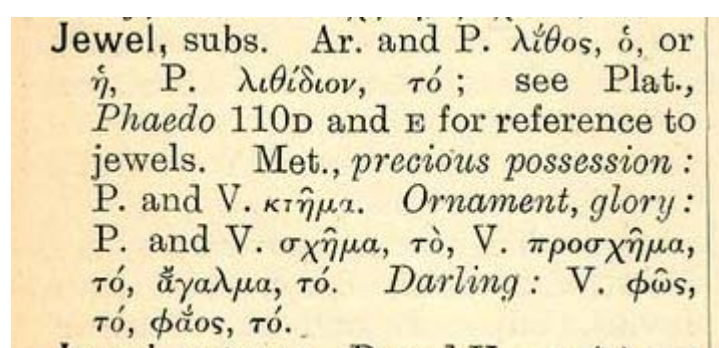
Lapis Philosophicus means the "jewel of the alchemist", since the term Philosophicus means an alchemist not, as is commonly said, a philosopher, just as lapis (qv. λίθος τῶν σοφῶν) when used in Latin alchemical texts means "jewel" and not "stone".

For esoteric hermetic tradition relates that λίθος as a jewel, or precious stone, was attested by Herodotus, who in The Histories, Book II, 44, wrote, in reference to "the sacred Temple of Heracles", ἡ δὲ σμαράγδου λίθου λάμποντος τὰς νύκτας μέγαθος.

It was possibly used in the same way by Aristotle who wrote, in reference to the Nine Archons,

ἀναγράφαντες δὲ τοὺς νόμους εἰς τοὺς κύρβεις ἔστησαν ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τῇ βασιλείῳ καὶ ὤμοσαν χρῆσεσθαι πάντες. οἱ δ' ἑννέα ἄρχοντες ὁμνύντες πρὸς τῷ λίθῳ κατεφάτιζον ἀναθήσειν ἀνδριάντα χρυσοῦν, ἐάν τινα παραβῶσι τῶν νόμων: ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν οὕτως ὁμνύουσι. Athenian Constitution, 7.1

Also, as noted in *English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* by S. C. Woodhouse, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1910,



Plato, Phaedo 110d-e: ὧν καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε λιθίδια εἶναι ταῦτα τὰ ἀγαπώμενα μόρια, σάρδιά τε καὶ ἰάσπιδας καὶ σμαράγδους καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα: ἐκεῖ δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ τοιοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ἔτι τούτων καλλίω.

{4} Translation by David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates*, 2017, ISBN 978-1976452369. Gratis open access file: <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf> [Accessed November 2021]

{5} *The Hebdomian Way*, <https://sevenoxonians.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/hebdomian-way-rs.pdf>

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